

NBC NIGHTLY NEWS

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U.S./
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BROKAW: Good evening. President Reagan has declared war on terrorism. News of his crackdown emerged today as an American Embassy employe was killed by terrorists in El Salvador and investigators were trying to determine whether two American officials killed in Africa were terrorists' targets. The president has authorized preemptive strikes against terrorist strongholds and revenge raids. Chris Wallace at the White House tonight with more details.

WALLACE: The new policy has set forth a national security directive 130 A, signed by the president on April 3rd but just made public. Mr. Reagan authorized preemptive strikes and reprisal raids to stop terrorists permitting creation of U.S. paramilitary units to carry out these actions. He ordered a big increase in intelligence gathering worldwide, especially in the Mideast. And he will ask Congress for authority to pay rewards, possibly as much as a half million dollars for information on terrorists. The administration has been working on a new policy since the Beirut bombing last October, when 241 U.S. servicemen were killed. In his new directive, the president orders 26 federal agencies to come up with still more options. Mr. Reagan has stated his determination to fight terrorism. PRESIDENT REAGAN: The leaders of all states must stand together against this new barbarism that threatens civilization. States that condone terrorism, undermine their own legitimacy.

WALLACE: The Reagan response is also controversial. U.S. agents are banned from involvement in assassination attempts. But today, White House officials said, a preemptive strike to stop a specific action is not an assassination attempt. That didn't convince one leading Congressman who said the president is overreacting. REP. DON EDWARDS (D-Chrmn., Judiciary Constitutional Rights Comm.): I wonder, who's pushing the panic button, why are they considering such radical and perhaps illegal methods?

WALLACE: To ease those fears, administration officials emphasize that no U.S. raid will be approved unless they are certain of their target. One official said, don't expect a lot of American cowboys shooting up terrorists. Chris Wallace, NBC News, at the White House.